



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO MEDIA ADVISORY

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COUNTY URGES BACK-TO-SCHOOL SHOPPERS TO CHECK THEIR RECEIPTS *Consumers Can Call County's Toll-Free Hotline to Report Pricing Errors*

Shoppers may be charged the wrong price for items in at least one out of three stores they enter, according to price scanner inspectors with the County Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures.

"We will be focusing our inspections on these types of retailers during the next few weeks to make sure shoppers are charged the price posted or advertised," said County Supervisor Dianne Jacob. "Back-to-school shopping is the second busiest shopping season of the year after the December holidays and people are rushed, but they must take time to check their receipts."

In 2006, County inspectors scanned 17,396 items at 555 locations and approximately 43 percent of those locations overcharged the consumer on at least one item. With hundreds of locations and ever-changing prices there can never be enough inspectors to do the job alone. The County program uses the stickers, notice posting, and the website to enlist the help of consumers.

"Consumers must be vigilant to protect themselves," Jacob said. "If there are violations, shoppers should notify store management before they leave the store or report the violations to the County."

Shoppers can also file a complaint online at www.sdcawm.org if they are overcharged or they can call the County's toll-free number, **1-888-TRUE SCAN (1-888-878-3722)**. Inspectors typically investigate consumer complaints within 24 hours.

Scanner inspection programs are not required by state law. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors passed the Consumer Confidence Protection Act in 1999, making this County one of the first in California to establish an inspection program. To this day, only 19 of the 58 California counties have similar inspection programs.

County inspectors often participate with prosecutors in multi-county investigations. In the last 24 months, seven lawsuits have been filed against major retailers because of price scanner violations. Lesser violations are handled through civil administrative procedures that include the potential for fines. Consumers can view retailer violations and lawsuits by visiting <http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/awm/scannerviolations.html>.

Editor's Note: For media availability with Robert Atkins, County Agricultural Commissioner and a price scanner inspector: Availability from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. or 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

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